

The
Baptist Denomination of
Sweden

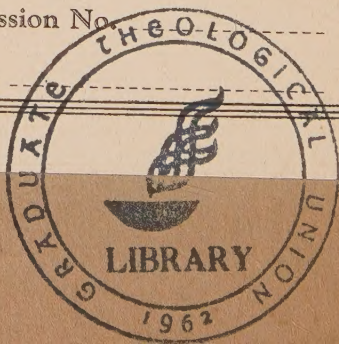
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THE BAPTIST DENOMINATION OF SWEDEN

A BRIEF ACCOUNT

BY

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*PUBLISHED BY THE SWEDISH CONGRESS COMMITTEE.
DISTRIBUTED BY B. M:s BOKFÖRLAGS A.-B., STOCKHOLM.*

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The Baptist Denomination of Sweden.

The latter part of the nineteenth century was a period of the greatest significance to the religious life of Sweden. This epoch was characterized by the great revivalist movements, which produced a spiritual renaissance without a counterpart in the religious history of Sweden, and which made a deep impression on all sections of the Swedish church. They led, moreover, to the establishment of the dissenting church bodies in Sweden, who at the present time constitute one of the most important, and certainly the most active, force in promoting the Kingdom of God among the Swedish people.

The three denominations of Dissenters in Sweden, the Swedish Baptist Denomination, the Methodist-Episcopal church of Sweden, and the Swedish Missionary Union (Congregational), all owe their origin to those religious revivals, and thus represent the organisation of that spontaneous movement.

It may be desirable at this point to refer to one of the conditions which went to further the establishment and subsequent growth of the independent religious movement during the period in question.

Influences from Puritanism and Herrnhutism made themselves felt in Sweden in the form of rather extensive religious movements as early as the

eighteenth century, but they did not lead to a separation from the Established church or to the formation of congregations on free-church principles. Neither did they affect the religious life in Sweden in nearly so powerful a manner as the above-mentioned revivals in the nineteenth century. That the latter movement came to assume such an essentially different character must be ascribed in the first instance to the direct influence exerted on it by the religious activity in the Anglo-Saxon countries. The beginning of this influence can be traced to the labours of the English Methodist pastor George Scott, who made Stockholm the field of endeavor. The importance of Scott's work was not so much that he lived between the years 1830 and 1842. The chief importance became the instrument of converting a number of persons, but that he became the intermediary between the English dissenting church movement and the religious revivals at that time taking place in Sweden. The connection thus established was of vast consequence to the religious developments in Sweden during the latter half of the nineteenth century.

The most important factor in transplanting Anglo-Saxon religious thoughts into Swedish soil was the Baptist movement, however, which made its influence felt in the country about the middle of last century. Through the Baptist congregations in Sweden the new religious activity there was more firmly cemented to that of the parent churches in the Anglo-Saxon world, and this circumstance has been very important in shaping the destinies of the free-church

movement as a whole in Sweden during the last few decades. It is quite true that the Baptist churches in Sweden were not alone in introducing English and American free-church thought, but it is no exaggeration to assert that it became the most important intermediary in accomplishing this result. From the point of church history this will probably be accounted the greatest achievement of the Swedish Baptist movement. On the other hand, it is undoubtedly true that Baptist thought in Sweden has been strongly influenced by the previous teaching of Lutheranism in the country during several centuries. To this fact can be traced a certain special character present in the Swedish Baptist Denomination.

The following brief account of the inception and early history of Swedish Baptist Denomination is given merely to draw attention to a few factors which have influenced its development till the present day. Though of necessity brief and fragmentary we trust that this summary will demonstrate the historical connection between the Baptist movement in Sweden and the activity of the Baptist churches abroad.

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The first Baptist church in Sweden was organized on the 21st of September 1848. This was in Landa parish in the province of Halland, not far from the city of Gothenburg. The circumstances which led up to the establishment of this church are worth mentioning. A Swedish sailor named F. O. Nilsson, born on an island outside of Gothenburg on the 28th of July 1809, had been converted on

a visit to a sailor's church in New York. This occurred in 1834. The young sailor having found peace in God and conviction of the forgiveness of his sins, felt strongly moved to do something for his comrades, and bring them to a knowledge of Christ. He worked for some time as a tract missionary among German immigrants in New York harbour, in the service of a Tract Society. In 1839 he began seriously to consider plans of doing something for his own countrymen, and decided to return to Sweden and settle at home, at least for some time. Religious conditions in Sweden at that time were most unfavourable, and religious liberty a rather unknown idea. Every religious movement which could not be co-ordinated with in the forms of the Established church was regarded as a danger and not permitted, and laws were in force which condemned adherents of such movements to very severe penalties and even banishment.

In 1842 Mr. Nilsson was appointed by the Seamen Friends' Society of New York as its missionary to the seamen at the port of Gothenburg. He had great success on that post, and was later made the agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society in Sweden, in whose service he did good work as distributor of bibles and religious tracts.

It was not until the year 1845 that Mr. Nilsson first became acquainted with the Baptist principles. In that year Gothenburg was visited by another Swedish seafaring man, Captain G. W. Schroeder, who had joined the First Baptist Mariners' Church in New York. He met Mr. Nilsson and drew the

latter's attention to the teachings of the New Testament in regard to the baptism upon mature adoption of the faith. After leaving Sweden Captain Schroeder sent writings on the subject to Nilsson who, after an eager study of the question of baptism, became convinced that as a follower of Christ it was his duty to become baptized. There was no one in Sweden at that time, however, who could perform that act, but having learned from Schroeder's letters that there was a Baptist church in Hamburg, he went to that place in July of 1847 in order to be baptized. After he had studied the Baptist tenets closely, and made his confession of faith before the congregation, he was baptized in the Elbe river by J. G. Oncken on the 1st of August 1847.

He returned to Sweden immediately after his baptism and began to work for the promotion of his faith in accordance with his Baptist convictions. It did not take long till some of his friends and relations were ready to follow his example and be baptized. They wrote to Hamburg with a request that someone should be sent to perform the baptism. In response to this appeal the church delegated Pastor A. P. Förster in Copenhagen to journey to Sweden, and to baptize those who had become converted to the Baptist principles of faith. Förster carried out this mission in September 1848. In the evening of the 21st of that month, a little flock gathered on the shore of a bay of the Cattegat, and here Pastor Förster baptized four men and a woman in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

It was an occasion of deep feeling. The prayers sent up to God were the most fervent. These plain people who, in obedience to the word of God and the promptings of their own conscience, dared to take this step were few in numbers and of the most humble of Christ's followers, as the world judges. They were no doubt fully aware of the persecution and the sufferings their act would expose them to, but the certainty that they went the road God had pointed out to them, and that they had the assurance of His presence on the solemn occasion, gave them the happiness and satisfaction that always accompanies these momentous decisions.

After the ceremony the little flock turned their steps to Borekulla farm a couple of miles distant from the scene of the baptism. The first Swedish Baptist church was formed the same night, comprising six members with Mr. F. O. Nilsson as their leader. The Baptist faith was adopted by many others very soon, however, so that the church in April of the following year consisted of thirty-five members. Mr. Nilsson was as yet not ordained to preach the Gospel. The Swedish baptist church, however, sent him again, in the spring of the same year, to Hamburg, and made a request that he be ordained to serve as preacher. The German Baptist congregation gave their consent, and on the 6th of May 1849 Mr. Nilsson was ordained pastor with prayer och the laying of hands by the pastors J. G. Oncken, J. Köbner and Alb. Schauffler.

The beginning of the spread of the Baptist teaching in Sweden naturally attracted much attention,

and the authorities of the Established church instituted energetic measures for putting down this movement, which they looked upon as a danger to the State church. The Baptists had to endure many hardships for their faith from the persecutions which followed. In 1850 Mr. F. O. Nilsson was sentenced by the Supreme Court to banishment for remaining faithful to his Baptist convictions. After trying in vain to have the sentence set aside, and not obtaining the King's pardon, he had to leave the country in 1851. He settled down in Danmark which at that period had more enlightened laws relating to religion.

The prosecution of Nilsson created a great stir abroad especially in England, and the letters of the chief sufferer describing the persecutions of the Baptists in Sweden were inserted in the »The Evangelical Christendom», the organ of the Evangelical Alliance, and in the »The Primitive Church Magazine», published in London. The Evangelical Alliance sent in appeals to the authorities in Sweden for the repeal of the laws which made these persecutions possible, and the English Baptists sent in numerous petitions for justice to their Swedish brethren. Dr. Edward Steane in particular devoted much of his activity to the promotion of the cause of religious liberty in Sweden. The Swedish Baptists will always feel grateful to him for his intercession on their behalf. His energetic efforts to secure religious liberty, and toleration between the different denominations, was in the end crowned with success, to which result contributed in no small degree the

visit he made to Sweden in 1858, accompanied by Pastor Howard Hinton.

The little baptist church formed in 1848 had had to endure many vicissitudes upon the banishment of its leader. This turned the thought of the members to emigration to the United States. They wrote to this effect to Mr. Nilsson who was then active in the Baptist congregation in Copenhagen, and begged him to accompany them on their voyage to the New World. When his consent had been gained twenty-one of the members of the church set out for America in May of 1853, and the little community was thereby reduced to one half of its membership. Through that the conditions for its growth and development were much circumscribed.

The Baptist denomination had nevertheless secured a footing in Sweden through the life and work of Pastor Nilsson. The prosecution which led to his banishment from his native country did even more perhaps to direct attention to Baptist thought and principles, and created a firmer ground in the country for their further extension and adoption. Pastor F. O. Nilsson therefore stands out as the pioneer of the Baptist denomination in Sweden. He was a gifted preacher, and although he had not received any special training for his calling, he had acquired a fund of knowledge, very rare in one of his position, through intense study and reading. But it is above all to his unwavering faith in the principles he had accepted, from contemplation of God's own word, that he was enabled to carry out the missionary

work the fruits of which have benefitted succeeding generations.

At the time when Pastor Nilsson left Sweden the Baptist ideas had begun to take root also in other parts of the country, notably in Stockholm. A Swedish merchant, Peter Johansson, who had lived several years in Hull and had been baptized there, paid a visit to Stockholm in 1848, and it was due to his visit that the community of people in the Capital, at that time imbued with new religious life, became acquainted with the Baptist religious principles. The interest was still more stimulated by the visit by Pastor F. O. Nilsson in 1850, undertaken for the purpose of craving the intercession of the King in commuting the sentence of banishment.

About this time an event occurred which was destined to be of vast importance in the history of the Baptist Denomination in Sweden. This was the conversion to the Baptist faith of Pastor Anders Wiberg. This man, who was born on the 17th of July 1816, had served for some years as clergyman in the Swedish Established church, but he was forced by his conscience to apply to be relieved from his office, because this compelled him to bestow Holy Communion on persons who were not believers in Christ. He was a man of strong faith with very firm religious convictions. He came to Stockholm in 1850 after having resigned his office as clergyman and there became acquainted with religious persons who had come to lean toward the Baptist persuasion. He was himself at that time a strict Lutheran, and felt great uneasiness about some of his friends having

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lost their belief in infant baptism. He even had an idea of writing a book in defence of the baptismal dogma of the Lutheran church. Then something occurred which turned out to be of decisive importance to his whole subsequent life development. Accompanied by one of his friends, Mr. D. Forssell, he paid a visit to Hamburg in 1851, and there became acquainted with the pastors Oncken and Köbner. He also attended a service in the local Baptist church which made a strong impression upon him, and he discussed the question of baptism with the said two ministers. On leaving he was presented by Pastor Köbner with some writings on the subject, and through reading of Dr. Dagg's interpretation of Chap. 7:14 of the I Cor. he found that this text, which he had up till then regarded as a strong support of infant baptism, proved quite the contrary. He thereafter devoted much study and thought to the question of baptism, which soon led him to a conviction of the truth of the Baptist faith. Feeling the need of justifying his altered views to his friends, he wrote the following winter a large work on baptism, and this book turned out to be of epoch-making importance in the development of the Baptist cause in Sweden. This work created a vast amount of attention in the circles which looked upon Wiberg as one of their leaders, and many of them regarded him as an apostate from »the pure Evangelical doctrine».

He was advised by his physician to take a sea-voyage for the sake of his health, and in the spring of 1852 he decided to journey to America. The vessel

on which he sailed stopped over a couple of days in Copenhagen, and then he looked up Pastor F. O. Nilsson who had been banished from Sweden, and asked to be baptized by him. After making his confession of faith in the Baptist principles before the Baptist congregation of Copenhagen he was baptized by Pastor Nilsson on the 23rd of July 1852. Filled with great happiness from the religious experience gained through this act he continued on his way to America, a country of which he had very little actual knowledge. He carried with him a letter of introduction from Nilsson to the American Baptists, and this letter contains a strong appeal to the American Baptists for appointing Wiberg a missionary and send him back to Sweden for doing God's work there. This letter of introduction may indeed be looked upon as the inception of the intercourse between the Swedish Baptists and the The Northern Convention of the United States, existing since those days and carrying with it so many blessings.

Not long after his arrival in America Pastor Wiberg entered into the service of The American Baptist Publication Society through the intercession of Pastor Ira R. Steward. During this period he compiled his second great work, »The Christian Baptism», published simultaneously in English and Swedish. He remained in the United States three years on this occasion, leaving at the end of that time upon his appointment as the Society's worker in Sweden to act as preacher and leader of the dissemination of writings for the propagation of Baptist ideals there. He accepted this call with

great joy. The immediate reason for the decision of the Society to interest itself actively in the Baptist cause in Sweden was an urgent appeal by the Baptists of Stockholm that Wiberg should be sent back to organize the Baptist work. The persecution to which the former were still subjected also urged the American Baptists to take measures for aiding their struggling co-religionists in Sweden.

During Wiberg's stay in America 1852—1855 the Baptist movement had made further headway in Sweden, thanks to his book on Baptism published shortly before his departure. Two furriers, D. Forssell and P. F. Hejdenberg, journeyed to Hamburg in 1854 and were baptized there, the latter also being ordained preacher and empowered to baptize. He baptized a good many communicants in Stockholm as well as in the provinces of Dalecarlia and Östergötland, and several Baptist churches were formed. Especially in Dalecarlia the Baptist persuasion obtained a rather large following, but there, too, they were subjected to much persecution. Many were sentenced to heavy fines, and prison on bread and water diet.

Wiberg became the actual leader of the Baptist movement on his return to the country. He possessed exceedingly high qualifications for this office in being a theologian with a thorough and solid education and a noble Christian character. He was well initiated in the religious and ecclesiastical conditions in the country, and he was able to present and defend the Baptist tenets from the platform and in writing in an able and talented manner. He also had the

authority of the Society to engage tract distributors, and only a few months after his return he started the publication of a periodical »Evangelisten» which became of extraordinary value in promoting the Baptist cause in Sweden. It was edited by Wiberg in a most able manner, and gained so many subscribers even during the first year of publication that the financial side of the venture was assured.

Wiberg's physical powers, however, could not endure the strain of all the duties imposed on him. He therefore wrote to his friend, Pastor Gustaf Palmquist, whose field of work was laid among the Swedes in the United States, and asked him to return to his home country and assist in the heavy work. The latter agreed to this and came back to Sweden in 1857, and for the next ten years, to his death in 1867, carried out a work full of blessing as Wiberg's coadjutor.

In 1857 the first Baptist Conference was held in Sweden. There were at that time about forty baptistchurches in the country with a total membership of somewhat over 2,000. At this conference the first steps were taken to organize the churches into an association. It was called »The United Swedish Baptist Churches», and an Executive Committee was appointed to direct the work and administer the joint affairs. This was a very important measure which strengthened the feeling of common interests among the Baptists in a high degree. The same Conference adopted other decisions of consequence, which turned out beneficial to the Baptist cause in Sweden.

Another joint Conference, held in the year follow-

ing, was of no less importance than the first one. Four prominent representatives of the Baptist Denomination in other countries took part in the Conference, viz, Dr. Edward Steane and Pastor Howard Hinton from England and the Pastors J. G. Oncken and Julius Köbner from Germany. It was naturally a great event for the Swedish Baptists, still groping and inexperienced, to obtain the advice and assistance of men of such high standing as the above mentioned delegates. After their return to England Dr. Steane and Mr. Hinton published a very interesting book about their journey in Sweden and their participation in the Baptist Conference. The title of the book was »A Tour in Sweden during the Summer of 1858», and it contains many items of interest to the Baptist movement in Sweden.

The first decade in the history of the Swedish Baptist Denomination can be regarded as the period of its founding. At the end of this period there were in Sweden 95 Baptist churches with a total number of members of 4,311. The progress may therefore be regarded as having been rapid in view of the strong resistance made by both church and secular authorities. Through the strong fight made against religious intolerance the Baptists during the eighteen-fifties did a great service to the cause of religious liberty, and the Riksdag finally found itself prompted to repeal the unjust laws according to which many early Baptists had been sentenced to heavy fines and imprisonment for being staunch in their faith.

The growth and development of the Swedish

Baptist Denomination since 1860 is in the first place due to three factors, viz. the formation of the District Associations, establishment of the Bethel Seminary, and the organization of the Swedish Baptist Union. As we are unable within the present compass to give a full history of the Denomination, a few words describing these events will give the best idea of the conditions at hand for development.

The District Associations.

The Swedish Baptist churches, as already mentioned, had been united into an organization in 1857, with an Executive Committee to administer the current affairs. This organization, however, was rather defective, and must be looked upon more as an expression of the unity of faith, which the churches felt as possessing with one another, than as an organ necessary for the success of the Baptist cause. Wiberg made a strong appeal already at the second Conference in 1858 for the formation of Associations of Baptist churches, which should serve as organs for conducting the work. The Conference, too, made a statement for the advisability of the churches in certain districts coming together for the purpose of forming district associations. The first District Association came into being in Skåne (Scania) in 1860. Mr. F. O. Nilsson had come back to Sweden in the same year, after his sentence of banishment had been rescinded, and it was he who took the initiative to forming the association in question. Both Wiberg and Nilsson had had an

opportunity to study the mode of organization of the American Baptists, and they endeavoured to organize the Swedish Baptist Denomination in the main in conformity with the American plan. Wiberg also made a journey to England in 1860—1861, and during his stay there for nearly a whole year and through his contact with English Baptists, he received impressions and ideas which were of great importance to his later activity in organizing the work. Shortly after Wiberg's return from England the third General Conference of the Swedish Baptist churches was held. It was there decided definitely that the Swedish Baptist Denomination should be organized into District Associations, and the by-laws for these Associations were adopted. There were at that time 150 Baptist churches in the country, and the Conference decided that they should be divided up, or joined, into seven District Associations. The total number of communicants was 4,800. By means of this organization plan the young church community had obtained very important organs for taking care of its interests and for promoting the expansion of Baptist ideas in Sweden. The by-laws adopted on that occasion stated as follows regarding the aims of the Associations, viz.

1. They were to promote and strengthen the churches in the fait;
2. To maintain connections between the different churches within the district;
3. To send out preachers of the Gospel and tract distributors, and to furnish the churches with ministers;

4. To guard the churches against injury from unsuitable workers;

5. To act as intermediary in settling controversies within the churches;

6. To expel from communion churches which might have adopted false ideas or which had not observed proper religious conduct.

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The Swedish Baptist Denominations has retained the organization it received in 1861, but the number of District Associations has been increased, and is at the present time twenty-one. They have been instrumental in preserving the unity between the churches, and have at the same time been the means for carrying out the missionary work of the denomination.

The Betel Seminary.

At the third General Conference of the Swedish Baptist churches on the 23rd—28th of June 1861 it was decided to establish a college in Stockholm for the training of ministers and teachers, and, as there were at that time no suitable instructors in Sweden for a school of that kind, it was further decided to try to obtain instructors and lecturers from abroad. It was in particular Pastor Wiberg who was urgently desirous of realizing the thought of a Baptist college in Sweden. He felt more clearly than the rest at

that time the need of an institution for training those, who were to serve the churches as ministers and teachers. He understood that a seminary was an absolutely necessary condition for the development of the Denomination on the right lines. But it was no easy matter to realize the decision of the Conference. For this were required not only personal initiative and foresight but also pecuniary means, and there was small hope that the churches themselves would be in a position to guarantee the costs connected with the establishment and maintenance of a theological college. It therefore became necessary for engaging suitable teachers, and for assuring the financial standing of the plan, to appeal to Baptists of other countries to give their aid in its realization. Nothing could be more natural than that the United States were the first to come in consideration, because the American Baptists had already at an earlier stage contributed generously to the common cause in Sweden through the American Baptist Publication Society. Pastor Wiberg decided to make a journey to America for arousing interest in the matter. There was another object in making this journey. The Baptist church in Stockholm, whose minister he was, had acquired a building lot for a chapel, but it had no means to carry out the building, and Pastor Wiberg felt the necessity of appealing to the American brethren also for this cause.

His journey to America could not, however, be undertaken till 1863. It was not a favourable time from an economic point of view in America, as the

Civil War was still in progress, but in spite of such untoward circumstances his cause received much consideration and he personally much encouragement from the American Baptists. He collected a considerable sum for the chapel and also succeeded in arousing interest for the proposed seminary. Expectations of contributions were held out, if suitable teachers could be procured.

On his travels in America Wiberg met a young Swede, who had taken part with distinction in the war on the Northern side after his graduation from the Colgate University in 1861. This was K. O. Broady. He had served in the army three years, and during the latter part of that period as General Hancock's Chief of Brigade, being brevetted colonel in the American Army by President Lincoln upon his retirement to devote himself to the ministry. Wiberg saw in him the man whom God had chosen as leader for the projected seminary in Sweden. He gave Broady an account of the oppressed state of the Baptists in Sweden, and pointed out their need of aid especially in the matter of training of ministers. After some consideration and much prayer the latter decided to return to Sweden in Wiberg's company for the purpose of starting the school of ministry.

The American Baptist Publication Society, as mentioned previously, had contributed to the furtherance of the Baptist cause in Sweden, but, as it was regarded more suitable that the American Baptist Missionary Union should conduct this mission also, a request to that effect was made to the

Board of the Union. After considerable negotiations, and upon Wiberg and Broady having had an opportunity of stating the needs and prospect of the Swedish mission before Dr. Warren and the Board, the Missionary Union decided to engage both Wiberg and Broady as well as Dr. J. A. Edgren as their missionaries in Sweden. The first named was to be in charge of the evangelical and tract distributing work, and the two latter were to teach in the Seminary, of which Broady was made the principal.

The three Swedes with their families left the United States in the summer of 1866 for Sweden, and shortly after their return the fourth General Conference of the Swedish Baptists was held. It was definitely decided there to establish a seminary at Stockholm which received the name of the Bethel Seminary. This important step was made possible solely as a result of the generosity shown by the American Baptist brethren. How important this assistance has been to the development of the Baptist Denomination in Sweden will be best realized when stating as a simple fact, that the Bethel Seminary has for nearly sixty years been the chief mainstay of the Baptist cause in the country. The American Baptist Missionary Union has up till the present liberally aided the Baptists in Sweden, and this has most assuredly been one of the most important factors in the growth and strengthening of the Baptist Denomination of Sweden.

The Bethel College commenced its work in the autumn of 1866 with only seven students, and the course of training was at first limited to three years;

shortly afterwards, however, increased to four years. The number of students grew by and by, and the interest for the College increased according as the churches obtained capable teachers from it.

Col. K. O. Broady, D. D., LL. D., was the Principal of the Bethel Seminary for forty years, from 1866 to 1906, and he took part in the instruction till his death on the 13th of March 1922. His life work in that capacity did much to advance God's cause in Sweden. All who have had the privilege of being taught by him have received strong impressions which have been of influence to their whole life and work, and they retain the memory of a noble man, a great Christian character, and a teacher of high attainments. By the side of Wiberg he will stand for all time as one of the greatest men of the Swedish Baptist Denomination.

The Rev. A. Drake, D. D., served as teacher at the Bethel Seminary for forty years. He was graduated from the University of Uppsala and possessed a thorough education and wide culture. Up to his death in 1906 he stood by the side of Broady, and the two carried out a joint work which the Swedish Baptists will never cease to remember with feelings of gratitude.

Several other men of high character and attainments have served as instructors at the Bethel Seminary. The Rev. J. A. Edgren and Dr. Erik Nyström were teachers there in eighteen-sixties, and Pastor Wiberg also assisted in the teaching at one period. Dr. C. E. Benander has been Principal of the Bethel Seminary since 1906.

The Bethel Seminary has had rather intimate connection with Colgate University in the United States. In the first place, the two principals of the College up till the present, Dr. Broady and Dr. Benander, both received a very considerable part of their education at Colgate, and several of the students of Bethel Seminary have continued their studies there. It goes without saying that this has been instrumental in keeping up the contact between the Swedish and the American Baptists, and the Colgate University has therefore exercised a very strong influence on the development of the Baptist cause in Sweden.

More than five hundred students have attended the Bethel Seminary for a longer or shorter period, and most of them have devoted themselves to the ministry in Sweden. Not a few, however, have become missionaries to the heathen and have in such capacity carried out a work full of blessing. Several of the graduates, moreover, have become identified with the Baptist church work in America, and a few in Finland and some other countries.

The ordinary course of attendance at the Bethel Seminary is four years, but an extra year course is available for students with special aptitude for study. In 1920 the first graduates from the five-years course left the College. Special courses are conducted for those who intend to devote themselves to the missionary field, and a two-year course for those who for some reason cannot attend the school for a longer period.

The teaching staff of the Bethel College comprises at present the following members:

C. E. Benander, D. D. (Principal); The Rev. *John Cederoth*; *N. J. Nordström*, Cand. Phil.; *Fredr. Hedvall*, Mag. Phil.¹; *P. G. Westin*, Cand. Phil. et Theol.; *Olof Hammar*, Mag. Phil.

The latter four are graduates of the University of Uppsala. Instruction certain hours every week is also imparted by some outside teachers in addition to the regular staff of the College.

There are at present 55 students at the Bethel College of which rather a large number are preparing to take up duties as missionaries in heathen countries.

¹ At present on leave and serving as Principal of the Sjövik People's High-School in Dalecarlia, popular educational institution for Baptist youth.

Swedish Baptist Union.

The year 1889 ushered in a new important period in the history of the Swedish Baptist Denomination. In that year the Swedish Baptist Union was formed; a union of all the District Associations and consequently of all the Baptist churches embraced in the Association. It is quite true that the Baptist churches already possessed a common bond in the General Conferences, which chose an Executive Committee for handling their joint affairs, but they needed a permanent organization besides, to actively prosecute both the Home and Foreign mission work. The question of forming a missionary society of all the Baptists in the country had been discussed at several Conferences, but the matter had not advanced beyond discussion till the Conference in question. The by-laws then adopted for governing the activity of the Union stated that each baptist church belonging to any of the District Associations of the Swedish Baptist Denomination were to be regarded as ex officio member of the Society. No individual church was therefore required to apply for membership, but became automatically a member from being included in the District Association. Instead of choosing a Board for the Union, however, it was decided by the Conference to appoint a Com-

mittee for each department of the work engaged in. A committee was thus appointed for the Home mission, one for the Foreign mission, one for the Sunday school work, one for the Publications, and one for Chapel building. The members of these committees composed a sort of Board for the church work as a whole, and was styled »The Conference Committee». Probably it was the fear that a Board would become a sort of ecclesiastical governing body of the denomination, and thus of the separate churches, which led to the adoption of the committee plan. The organization formulated and established by the Conference of 1889 meant a great advance in the progress of the denomination, and, if it had been carried out thirty years earlier, would surely have been of immense benefit to the Baptist cause in Sweden.

The committee system of administration, described above, was retained till 1914, when new by-laws were adopted for the Swedish Baptist Union. According to the latter a Board of twenty-four persons are chosen at the annual meeting. This Board handles all matters which fall within the various provinces of the Union's activity, and selects among its members a committee of eleven to execute the decisions of the Board or the Conference. This change from the committee system to a Board has endowed the Union with a central administration necessary for a strong missionary activity. The rapid development of the work of recent years indicates that the said change in the organization of the denomination has been a most beneficial measure.

The Rev. J. Byström, D. D., has been the chairman of the Mission Board ever since it came into being. He has as immediate assistants the mission secretaries. Of the latter, the Rev. K. A. Modén is in charge of the current business and acts as secretary to the Mission Board, and the Rev. C. G. Lundin is secretary of the Foreign mission work.

Home Mission.

The missionary work carried on by the Swedish Baptists in the country has as its organs in the first place the District Associations, and in the second place the Mission Board. All District Associations have special workers who travel from place to place, and from one church to another, and it devolves on them in particular to pay attention to districts out of reach of the individual churches. This part of the work is supervised by the Boards of the various District Associations. Associations not strong enough to finance such an undertaking receive aid from the common fund for the Home mission, administered by the Mission Board. Proposals have been made of late to appoint a district secretary in each district, whose duty it would be to give his whole time to this work. He would, in other words, be a superintendent for the mission work in his district, and it is possible that this plan may be realized in a not too distant future.

The Mission Board is also directly engaged in the Home missionary work. It has two itinerant preachers in its service as revivalists, and two others

who devote themselves to the Sunday school work. All of these workers carry out a good work, full of benefit and blessing to the whole community.

In addition there are several Baptist missionary societies in the country, having as their principal object sending out Gospel preachers to districts neglected in the matter of Christian teaching. The largest of these is the Örebro Missionary Society which has in its service about 300 persons. Its leader is Pastor John Ongman. The Society arranges a Bible-school course every year for Evangelists which is usually attended by between 200 and 300 persons.

Of late years Bible-school courses have been instituted in nearly all districts, and they have done much good. Ordinarily these courses extend over a period of six weeks.

With great thankfulness to God for all the blessings He has bestowed on the work of the Home mission of the Swedish Baptist Denomination, it must be acknowledged that some important questions still await their solution. Of the things wanted most are servants of the Gospel well educated and equipped to carry out their duties; and means to maintain them.

Foreign Mission.

The Swedish Baptists embarked on independent mission work to the heathen in 1891. In that year the Rev. Carl Vingren was sent out to China as missionary, and in the course of the following year the Rev. E. V. Sjöblom went to The Congo. Long before that time, however, the Swedish Baptists had

shown an interest in Foreign mission. In the eighteen-fifties the Basle mission was supported by them with quite considerable amounts, and later they contributed annually to the Birma mission of the American Baptist Missionary Union. In 1881 Dr. Erik Lund was sent out to Spain, and other Swedish missionaries were subsequently sent out to work in the same field. It is not till the last few decades, however, that the interest in Foreign missions has led to stronger efforts being made to participate in this important work. Especially the most recent year have brought about so great an interest in the activity that a considerable expansion has been made possible.

The Swedish Baptists conduct the Foreign mission work by means of two separate missionary organizations, viz. the Swedish Baptist Missionary Society or Swedish Baptist Union and the Örebro Missionary Society. The former is an association of the Baptist churches in the country, and the latter a society of private Baptists interested in mission work. A certain amount of dualism in the mission work is unavoidable under the circumstances, and there has been proposals during late years for a consolidation of the two missions. It remains to be seen how the matter will be arranged in the time that follows. No clash of principles exists, however, and the Örebro Missionary Society is a Baptist missionary organization as well, entirely maintained and supported by Swedish Baptists. There is a connection, too, between the organizations, inasmuch as a mission committee is appointed every year composed

of representatives for both of the missions, which committee is to consider questions of common import to the two organizations.

The foreign mission of the Swedish Baptist Union.

This Society is engaged in missionary work in the following fields abroad, viz.

China (in the Shantung province), The Congo (Kasai district), Russia, Finland, and Esthonia. In China the Society has four head stations and one branch station. The missionaries number eighteen including three who go out this autumn. In addition a number of native workers assist in the work, and a very extensive and successful school work is carried on. The communicants numbered on the 1st of January last 1,548 persons.

In The Congo the missionary work is carried on by ten missionaries and four others stand prepared to go out there. The work is done from two head stations, and this mission though only a few years old gives much promise of good results.

Two women missionaries and one man are active in the missionary field in Russia. The conditions are there very unfavourable to such work, as might be expected. Six mission workers are engaged in Finland who are either entirely or in part supported by the Swedish Baptist Mission, and two workers labour in the Esthonia missionary work. There is, besides, one of the Society's workers still in Spain, although the Spanish mission has been transferred to the Southern Convention of America.

The disbursements of the Society for missionary work amounted last year to Sw. Kronor 268,000.

Örebro Missionary Society.

As mentioned in the foregoing, the Örebro Missionary Society carries on Evangelist propaganda in the home country, but it is also rather extensively engaged in Foreign mission work. It has sent out quite a number of missionaries of late years to different missionary fields, but as this activity is comparatively new the work has so far been principally devoted to preliminary arrangements. This explains why the Society is able to support such a rather large number of workers though its disbursements on this head are comparatively small. The Society has a Missionary School in Örebro, with a three-year course of instruction, which has sent out quite a large number of missionaries in recent years.

The Örebro Missionary Society carries on Foreign mission work in the following places, viz.

India (Gorakhpur district), fifteen missionaries;

China (Shansi province) — a lately started mission — nine missionaries;

French Congo — a mission of comparatively new origin — twentyone missionaries;

Brazil (Rio Grande do Sul), nine missionaries;

Siberia, two missionaries.

The last year's budget for the missionary work amounted to Sw. Kronor 157,000.

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The Swedish Baptists have thus about one hundred missionaries engaged in Foreign missions, and the total disbursements for Foreign missions amounted last year to a total of 425,000, or about 7 Kronor per church member.

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Swedish Baptist Young People's Activity.

One of the causes of the sound development and remarkable expansion of the Swedish Baptist denomination has been the care and attention bestowed on the youth, by giving them an opportunity to join in the work of promoting the Kingdom of God on earth. Societies of young men and women were formed rather early in several churches, but in the beginning of the eighteen-nineties young people unions comprising persons of both the sexes began to be instituted. This step was very successful, and in the following few years such unions were formed in many of the churches. The young people unions in certain districts organized themselves into District Associations, and at present there are such Associations in practically all of the Districts. 1905 was an important year in the history of the Swedish Baptist Young People's movement, as the Baptist Young People's Union of Sweden, comprising the Baptist Youth of the whole country, then came into being. According to its by-laws the The Young People's Union has for its object the strengthening of the Christian bond, and the promotion of spiritual

development of the young, being an organ for Christian juvenile work.

The Young People's Union is naturally closely connected with the Swedish Baptist Union, and is in reality to be regarded as the organ of the Denomination for its work among the young people. The general Conference, too, chooses three delegates to represent the Denomination in the Board of the Union. The Young People's Union makes an annual report of its activity to the Conferences held every year by the Swedish Baptist churches, and this report and other documents are inserted in The Baptist Mission Year-Book, published annually.

The Baptist Young People Union is active in both the Home and Foreign mission field. It has two itinerant secretaries who attend the annual meetings of the Societies and District Associations, conduct more important meetings, and endeavour in all other ways to promote the juvenile cause.

The Union holds an annual conference which is regarded as a great festival by the Youth, and to this all the different unions and societies send delegates.

The Foreign mission work is aided by the Union by its contributing the means to support some of the missionaries in China and The Congo.

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In 1921 a Christian People's High-school was started on the initiative of the Baptist Young People's Union. This was a very important event in the history of the movement in Sweden. From the first

announcement may be culled the following points regarding the aims and objects of the institution.

»The People's High-school for the Baptist Youth shall be a Christian educational institution, in the first place for the young people forming the members of the Union, but also for others who desire to avail themselves of its teaching and other facilities. It shall aim to give the young a Christian and general education for the improvement of their chances of gaining a livelihood in particular occupations, and to fit them for being of benefit in different spheres of life. The constant effort of the School shall be to widen the spiritual perception of the young, give them a deeper feeling of life's problems, arouse their interest in spiritual and idealistic values, and stimulate and encourage them to study and the acquirement of knowledge. It shall be first of all devoted to bring out the personality of the pupil, but in the next place to endow him with useful knowledge for practical employments. Great attention will be paid to the infusion of a Christian spirit in the instruction as well as the companionship outside school hours.»

The School is situated in the province of Dalecarlia, on the countryside in a district with beautiful natural scenery. The name is the »*People's High-school of Sjövik*«. During the first year of its existence it had thirty-five pupils, and during the year past the number was forty-two. The financing of this school work is undertaken by the People's High-school Society formed for that particular purpose. It is the intention of the society to enlarge

the institution and its activity as soon as the economic situation renders this possible; this in view of the promising development up to the present time. The School has been connected with the Bethel Seminary in such wise that one of the instructors there, Fr. Hedvall, M. A., has acted and still acts as the Principal of the High-school. The school course at Sjövik is of one year's duration.

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The juvenile work also embraces the children: Junior Societies and Sunday Schools. The first serve to gather together and keep under a Christian influence the young between the ages of 13 and 18. This work has been attended by much blessing, but being of rather recent date has not yet been introduced into all churches. According to the latest statistics there were on January 1, 1923 156 Junior Societies having 4,883 members.

The Sunday school activity, on the other hand, has received much attention from the Swedish Baptist Churches ever since the fifties of last century and up to our own day. Great results have been gained by it, and many children turned to Christ. According to the latest statistics there are 1,333 Sunday schools in the Swedish Baptist Denomination having 5,400 teachers and 65,784 attendants.

Baptist Publicity Work in Sweden.

The press has been an important factor in the mission work of the Swedish Baptists. The first

number of the first Baptist paper in Sweden was published on the 2nd of January 1856. This was »Evangelisten» published by Pastor Wiberg. It upheld the Baptist principles in a very talented manner, and carried on an energetic struggle against the religious intolerance in the country. Pastor Wiberg was the editor of the paper clear up till 1873, and Dr. Drake assisted him in this work during many years. In the latter year the paper was acquired by Dr. C. G. Lagergren, who was its editor till 1883 when the publication was discontinued.

In 1869 Dr. A. Drake commenced the publication of a paper which is still the organ of the Baptist Denomination in Sweden. This is »Veckoposten» (The Weekly Post). For twenty years he edited this periodical alone, and in a manner which places him easily in the first rank among editors of religious publications. In 1889 the paper was transferred to Messrs. J. Byström and J. A. Borgström who faithfully maintained the traditions of the paper. They were the owners of the publication till 1920 in which year it was taken over by the Swedish Baptist Denomination. Dr. J. Byström remained with the paper after its transfer, and is still the editor of »Veckoposten». This publication is the spokesman of the Swedish Baptist Denomination, and has performed that duty in a most praiseworthy manner both under the guidance of Dr. Drake and the later editors, being undoubtedly one of the most important mission organs of the Denomination on account of the excellent reading matter and wide circulation. »Veckoposten» publishes a supplement »Missions-

Posten» which is the organ of the Baptist Missionary Union for the Foreign missions.

»Söndagsskolläraren» (The Sunday-school Teacher) is the organ for the Sunday-school teachers of the Denomination, and »Barnens Egen Tidning» (Children's Own Paper) that of the children.

»Ungdomens Veckopost» (The Youth's Weekly Post), is the organ of the Swedish Baptist Young People Movement, and its editors are P. G. Westin, Cand. Phil. et Theol., and the Rev. Karl Jäder. It is published in an edition of about 7,000 copies and exercises a great influence in the circles it appeals to. Several other periodicals are published by Swedish Baptists but they are private enterprises. The Örebro Missionary Society publishes its own paper called »Missions-Baneret» (The Mission Banner).

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The Swedish Baptist Union has its own publishing office and printing house. The publishing business has expanded of late years in a very pleasing manner, and the office has sent out a great deal of good literature. Rev. Olof Nilsson is the director of the Publishing department.

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The Swedish Baptist churches have devoted considerable attention, especially of late years, to social and philanthropic work. In nearly every Baptistchurch there is a society or organization for

attending to this field of activity, and large amounts are yearly paid out in aid of the sick and poor and those in need of help from other causes. A training course for district nurses and visitors has been held during two years, and last year the »Swedish Baptists' Nursing and Deaconess Society» was formed. It has already acquired a large membership and carried out much good work. This society has for its object the furnishing of the churches with deaconesses and nurses, when and wherever they are needed, and the establishment of a hospital of its own at Stockholm as soon as possible, in which the training of deaconesses and nurses could take place. The interested and active leader of the movement is the physician Gottfrid Thorell, M. D.

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The foregoing compressed summary of the chief events in the history of the Swedish Baptist Denomination, and account of conditions and movements which have led up to them, as well as description of the rise and present standing of the institutions of which it is composed, may even in its necessarily fragmentary form give the reader an idea of the Baptist activity in Sweden during the seventy-five years. Its success has been conspicuous, but it is naturally impossible to show by means of figures the influence it has exerted on the religious life in Sweden. Many of the principles enunciated by the Baptists have permeated other religious bodies in the country. There are thousands of communicants

of other churches who reject the teaching of child baptism. They are Baptists in conviction though not members of the Baptist community. Several other cardinal principles and working methods of the Baptist church have received acceptance by different denominations in the country; from which it will be seen that the Baptist movement has made large contributions to the shaping of the religious life of the country during the last seventy-five years.

Religious conditions in Sweden have changed greatly since the inception of the Baptist movement there. The religious intolerance that existed then, and against which the Baptists had to maintain a severe struggle, has now on the whole disappeared. Even the Established church is now tolerant, and the cause of religious liberty is realized in nearly as high a degree as is possible in a country having an established church. This does not imply that complete religious liberty exists. Such cannot be attained so long as the system of an established church is continued. But the great advances made toward this goal during the last few decades give cause for thankfulness and joy.

The relations between Christians belonging to different faiths have also undergone a great change within recent years. There is unity and co-operation between the various dissenting churches, expressed in the formation of a »Free church Council» whose members, nine in number, are chosen by the Conferences of the three largest dissenting church bodies. This Council thus represents the Swedish Baptist Union, the Swedish Missionary Union (Con-

gregational), and the Methodist-Episcopal church of Sweden.

Even the Established church is imbued with different feelings toward the Baptists than formerly. Sporadic instances of intolerance may still occur, but on the whole there is no reason for complaint on their part. But this change has been brought about, by the Grace of God, through the contentions of Baptists and other Dissenters during the last seventy-five years. No victories are gained in the cause of religious liberty without struggle and sacrifice.

Concluding this simple narrative, we trust its tenor has made clear that the Baptists owe the favourable development of their cause in Sweden, in the first place, to having had as pioneers and early leaders men like F. O. Nilsson, Anders Wiberg, K. O. Broady, Adolf Drake, and others, Christians of noble character, gifted and of high attainments, and imbued with a burning zeal to perform the work of God; to having at their service at an early date a training college for ministers of the Gospel, which has prepared hundreds of young men for the service of God, and to the ministry of the congregations; and to having kept up the connection with Baptists in other countries: with the Baptist churches of Germany, of England and of the United States. The German Baptists early exerted an influence on the religious thought of the Swedish Baptists; the Baptists of England gave valuable aid in the struggle for religious liberty, and the Baptists in America have during many years aided the cause in Sweden in the most devoted and generous manner, at the

same time as it has fostered and trained many of the men who have given their life to the furtherance of the Kingdom of God in Sweden.

And first and last, thanks and praise are due to God, who in His infinite mercy has graced the Baptist mission in Sweden, and let it be an instrument for promoting His Kingdom on earth.

Table I.
Giving the number of Baptist church members in Sweden at the end of each
quinquennial period 1848—1823.

Year	Baptist church members			Collected money		Population during the year
	No. of members	Increase in membership during preceding 5 year period	Increase in per cent of total membership	No. of members in relation to population pro mille	Coll. money for church work during the last year in the period Kronor	Collected money per member Kronor
1848	7	—	—	—	—	3,397,454
1852	53	46	—	—	—	3,540,409
1857	2,105	2,052	—	—	—	3,687,601
1862	5,544	3,439	163.37	1.40	—	3,965,899
1867	7,478	1,934	34.88	1.78	—	4,195,681
1872	9,386	1,908	25.51	2.21	—	4,250,412
1877	13,703	4,317	46.00	3.06	41,703	4,484,542
1882	22,821	9,118	66.54	4.98	129,562	4,579,115
1887	31,849	9,028	39.56	6.73	221,557	4,734,901
1892	36,585	4,736	14.87	7.61	303,663	4,806,865
1897	39,133	2,548	6.96	7.81	432,496	5,009,632
1902	42,878	3,745	9.57	8.25	524,517	5,198,752
1907	48,180	5,302	12.36	8.96	696,350	5,377,713
1912	54,268	6,088	12.63	9.68	989,282	5,604,192
1917	57,454	3,186	5.87	9.90	1,301,968	5,800,847
1923*	59,903	2,449	4.26	10.06	1,848,425	5,954,316
					3,163,844	52.82

* The period comprises six years.

Table II.
Giving membership of Sunday-schools and Young People Unions during
quinquennial periods 1857—1923.

Year	Sunday-school children					Young People Unions				
	No. of children	Increase during the 5 years	Increase in per cent of children attending	In proportion to membership of churches per cent	In proportion to membership of Young People Unions per cent	No. of members	Increase during the 5 years	Increase in per cent of members	In proportion to membership of churches per cent	In proportion to attendants of Sunday-schools per cent
1857	502	—	—	22,85	—	—	—	—	—	—
1862	1,295	793	159,96	23,36	—	—	—	—	—	—
1867	1,731	436	33,67	23,15	—	—	—	—	—	—
1872	8,684	6,953	401,60	92,53	—	—	—	—	—	—
1877	17,769	9,085	104,62	129,67	—	—	—	—	—	—
1882	18,564	795	4,47	80,35	—	—	—	—	—	—
1887	31,273	12,709	68,46	98,19	—	—	—	—	—	—
1892	37,808	6,535	20,90	103,34	—	—	—	—	—	—
1897	43,905	6,097	16,13	112,20	—	—	—	—	—	—
1902	52,053	8,148	18,56	121,40	378,90	14,000	—	—	32,65	26,90
1907	54,550	2,497	4,80	113,22	266,21	20,491	6,491	46,36	42,53	37,56
1912	64,907	10,357	19,00	119,60	283,91	22,862	2,371	11,57	42,13	35,22
1917	65,435	528	0,81	113,89	242,52	26,906	4,044	17,69	46,83	41,12
1923*	65,784	349	0,53	109,82	248,82	31,321	4,415	16,40	44,14	40,19

* The period comprises six years.

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